

# **SECTION F**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Recommendations: specific learning difficulties**

1. In order to ensure that effective provision is made, systematic records and analysis of outcomes for pupils with specific learning difficulties should be kept and used.
2. In order to ensure resources for special educational needs are appropriately targeted and recycled, exit criteria should be developed and implemented to remove support and encourage independent learning in pupils who are functioning at an appropriate level.

### **Recommendations: moderate learning difficulties**

1. In order to address the anomaly of different resourcing for children with apparently the same need; consideration needs to be given to agreeing a single funding model in partnership with schools. It is suggested that all MLD pupils could be educated in mainstream.
2. In order to ensure consistency in the placement of pupils (If a range of alternate provision is maintained); consideration needs to be given to understanding what profile of need is best met in which type of provision.
3. In order to ensure informed decision making determines the profile of resourcing and placement an urgent exercise should be considered to look at attainment levels and outcome destinations for children and young people with MLD.

### **Recommendation: severe learning difficulties**

1. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of provision made for children with SLD, the LA should work with the special schools to agree a profile of outcome measures and destination reports.

### **Recommendation: profound and multiple learning difficulties**

1. Individual outcome measures are developed for children with profound and/or multiple learning difficulties.

### **Recommendations: behaviour, emotional and social difficulties**

1. In order to ensure that a comprehensive commissioning strategy is achieved for pupils with BESD is developed, a full resourcing profile drawing together all the financial strands, should be compiled to enable any strategic reallocation to be comprehensive.

2. In order that the effectiveness of behaviour support can be appreciated and evaluated, all those involved in this area (Behaviour Support Services, special schools, educational psychologists, SEN service) should work together to develop and agree an appropriate range of outcome measures that can be collected systematically, analysed and reported on.
3. In order to ensure consistency is maintained across the full continuum of behaviour support, consideration should be given to the Behaviour Support Service having a more overt role in linking with special schools and SEN behavioural decisions including out of authority placements.
4. In order to ensure value for money, a cost benefit analysis, including financial services and appropriate professionals, needs to be carried out to evaluate if increasing special school provision within the authority would reduce the dependency on out of authority placements and, in effect, be cost neutral.

#### **Recommendation: speech, language and communication needs**

1. In order that the effectiveness of any support and intervention for pupils with SLCN can be measured, the LA and specialist services should work together to agree an appropriate range of outcome measures. These should include quantitative standardised data relating to language development and attainment, and qualitative data relating to satisfaction of service delivery.

#### **Recommendations: hearing impairment**

1. In order to ensure that a comprehensive data set is available for an informed needs analysis, steps must be taken to bring together all the information into a single location.
2. In order to ensure that intervention is targeted only on those children whose needs require it, a review of the current eligibility criteria, reflecting on the impact of HI on educational progress and exit criteria should be undertaken.
3. In order to ensure that the interventions made are effective, the systematic recording and reporting of outcome measures must progress.
4. In order to ensure that the needs of more pupils are effectively met within the Authority, a 'lessons learned' review of all out of authority placements should be undertaken and a clear placement policy developed and implemented.

## **Recommendations: visual impairment**

1. In order to enable effective commissioning, a single, comprehensive database embracing data from the Health Service, SENIT, and SEN teams needs to be established.
2. In order to ensure that the LA can maximise the use of information concerning the early identification and notification of children who are blind and visually impaired, arrangements need to be established with Health Services concerning appropriate notification. Notification processes between the CWD team, SENIT and the SEN team also need to be secure.
3. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of services, inform parental choice and inform commissioning, arrangements need to be made to systematically record outcomes. Outcome information should include educational attainment outcomes, SEN outcomes and post school destinations.
4. In order to ensure that the VI service is meeting the requirements of the LA, a formal service level agreement setting out standards and expectations, including reporting arrangements, needs to be established.
5. In order to facilitate a common approach to special education through closer working within the authority, a pattern of regular (at least annual) meetings, to a predetermined agenda and with planned outcomes, should be arranged between SEN commissioners and the VI service.
6. In order to ensure that the appropriate skills are available within the authority to meet the needs of blind and partially sighted children, a clear policy should be established and resourced to enable the acquisition of mandatory qualifications in the teaching of pupils with visual impairment and the teaching of braille.
7. In order to ensure that the Visual Impairment team only addresses needs considered a priority by the authority, an indication of their educational progress should be integrated into the eligibility criteria for all children who are not registered blind or partially sighted. Once the threshold of educational progress has been agreed and the caseload reviewed against it, a decision can be made as to the appropriate size of the team.

## **Recommendations: physical disability**

1. In order to ensure that there is a full understanding of the cost of supporting pupils with physical difficulties a single spreadsheet embracing the total spectrum of cost should be created.

2. In order to understand the apparent growth of pupils being identified with PD and supported by SENIT, an independent analysis of the caseload should be undertaken to see:
  - i. What are the causes of the PD?
  - ii. What is the impact of these difficulties on learning?
  - iii. Is the impact sufficiently severe to require intervention?
  - iv. What impact does the involvement of the specialist service achieve?

### **Recommendations: autistic spectrum disorders**

1. In order to address the challenge of delayed diagnosis:
  - a. Explore in partnership with Health commissioners what are the reasons for delay, and if the best practice multi disciplinary assessment model is being used.  
And/or
  - b. as clinical diagnosis does not in itself inform educational provision remove the lack of diagnosis as an inhibitor for placements.
2. In order to ensure that the planned profile of provision matches need and better information is available for strategic commissioning, the LA should consider working with appropriate specialists and professionals, in reworking the eligibility criteria to subdivide the category (in a similar way to the BESD category).
3. In order to address the apparent 'over identification' of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders it is recommended that the eligibility criteria are reviewed, with the appropriate engagement of partners and professionals. In particular consideration needs to be given to the hierarchy of choice of primary need. Guidance should be developed for schools to help ensure they allocate children appropriately to this category when recording needs.
4. In order to address the risk for growth of demand for placements and resources for young people aged 16-25, priority needs to be given to working out an appropriate strategy for this group in partnership with adult services.
5. In order to ensure that the needs of this group of children are appropriately and consistently met, a continuum of provision needs to be consolidated. Placements along this continuum of provision need to be made consistently.
6. In order to ensure that the needs of pupils with ASD are met, appropriate outcome measures need to be developed and progress to achieving these monitored, analysed and reported.

## **Overarching recommendation: SEN provision**

1. In order to ensure the appropriate provision profile is available to meet the needs of pupils with ASD, BESD and MLD, a strategic review of the continuum of provision and the best mix should be undertaken in partnership with special schools, ARMS, mainstream schools, specialist services and parents.

## **Recommendations concerning special schools**

1. In order that the LA, parents and others can understand and appreciate the successes that pupils in special schools achieve, an agreed profile of outcome measures and post school destination should be prepared, systematically recorded and appropriately reported.
2. In order that a full continuum of provision for pupils with special educational needs is supported and maintained, the LA should consider utilising the knowledge and skills in special schools to provide support for mainstream schools. This is particularly important where there is not the equivalent expertise available from SENIT.
3. In order to minimise the risks of increased demand for special school places occurring, as a consequence of changes in the legislative and funding frameworks, the LA should develop and initiate a communication strategy that would ensure headteachers, SENCOs, SEN governors and parents knew what resources were available to them and what would be the reasonable expectations.
4. In order to maximise the potential of the Comparison and Analysis of Special Pupil Attainment (CASPA) profile data that the special schools utilise, the LA should explore with them how this could be developed, shared and used strategically.
5. In order to ensure that special schools are providing an appropriate provision for the most vulnerable children, consideration should be given to how best special schools could be developed as a targeted resource for pupils with ASD.
6. In order to ensure that the needs of more children can be effectively met within Authority maintained provision, the LA should review, in partnership with Health Service commissioners and special schools, the arrangements for access to appropriate therapies.
7. In order to address anomalies identified in respect of pupils with MLD, the LA should consider as part of a strategic review of the continuum of provision for these children and young people the role special schools should play in providing provision.

## **Recommendations concerning planned places**

1. In order to ensure that provision is driven by need rather than input the future of Additionally Resourced Mainstream School (ARMS) should be considered in the context of a continuum of provision relating to each area of need.
2. In order that any development progress, there needs to be clarity as to:
  - Whether they are specialist or generic provision
  - Whether the pupils are on the roll or not
  - Whether they only take pupils with specific needs or accommodate a range of needs.
3. In order that a strategic future of ARMS is progressed, the whole learning community, not just ARMS heads, needs to be actively engaged in the debate about their future.
4. In order that there is a shared and understood clarity of purpose, all ARMS provision should:
  - i. be formally commissioned setting out the requirements and expectations of the Local Authority, the resources and responsibilities of the Local Authority and those of the Governing Body
  - ii. a press and publicity campaign utilising the council website, electronic communication and paper documentation should set out clearly and plainly the purpose of ARMS, the route of access to them and the resource they provide.
5. In order to provide stability of provision all ARMS should have a fixed term contract with a set review date. (This would probably require the School Forum endorsement as it would be committing resources for the future financial years).
6. In order to ensure that the ARMS do provide specialist support, a resourced programme of training and development should be designed following a Training Needs Analysis, and enhanced access to specialist teachers and educational psychologists should be built into the model.
7. In order to ensure that the ARMS are effective, an outcomes based model of evaluation should be initiated at the start of the new phase of their development.

## **Recommendations concerning centrally commissioned services**

### **SENIT**

1. In order to meet the needs of children with special educational needs the LA needs to retain a core of specialist staff who can provide expertise to support schools and parents.
2. In order to make the most effective use of resources, specialist teams should be seen as part of an integrated and co-ordinated continuum of provision working to support each area of need.
3. In order that the service operates strategically and fulfils the requirements of the Local Authority; there should be a written commissioning contract which specifies what outcomes are expected in each area of need. This will be more effective if it is developed together.
4. In order to ensure that best practice in commission is followed; the Quality Standards set by the DCSF (2008) should be used to inform the commissioning of SENIT.
5. In order to ensure that the intervention is effective, the LA needs to work with the specialist services to develop an appropriate range of outcome measures that are collected systematically and reported on regularly.
6. In order to ensure that as many children and young people as possible are educated within their community; amongst the outcome measures will be expectations relating to out of authority placements.
7. In order to ensure that support is focussed for the optimal time; exit criteria for all needs should be developed reflecting a reduction and cessation of support when appropriate educational outcomes are achieved.
8. In order to include perception measure in the evaluation of effective services; SENIT should further develop, consistently implement, analyse and report on service user satisfaction measures.
9. In order to ensure the services coordinate effectively with others providing support to the same groups of children; a pattern of coordinating meetings needs to be agreed and implemented.
10. In order to ensure that the SENIT teams retain the necessary level of training and expertise to deliver effective interventions, a staff training and development strategy should be developed, implemented and resourced.

11. In order to ensure schools continue to understand and value the contribution the services make, agreement should be sought with the schools forum to present an annual report focused on the outcomes the services achieve.

## **Hearing impairment**

12. In order to address a possible over identification of children and young people with hearing impairment:
  - i. eligibility criteria should be revised to focus on better educational and language outcomes
  - ii. clear exit criteria, stating when intervention should cease or be reduced should be developed
  - iii. the caseload should be rigorously reviewed, and independently monitored, against the strengthened criteria and if appropriate the establishment reduced
  - iv. the LA should undertake a benchmarking exercise with its three nearest statistical neighbours to ascertain the size and range of their HI services.
13. In order to ensure that a seamless, coordinated service for Hearing Impairment is delivered within the Authority; consideration should be given to further integrating the ARMS provision at High Spen with SENIT.
14. In order to ensure that the effectiveness of the service can be evaluated: outcome based evaluation criteria needs to be developed.
15. In order to ensure that children and young people with Hearing Impairment have their needs met within the Authority where appropriate; a support strategy that provides for exceptional intervention should be developed with SENS.

## **Visual impairment**

16. In order to ensure that the VI services are effective, an appropriate range of outcome measures, including educational attainment, should be developed, systematically collected, and reported.
17. In order to ensure that the VI services are focused on children with the greatest need, the eligibility and exit criteria should be amended to embrace educational progression data and demonstrate a clear process of systematically tailing off intervention when appropriate.

### **Portage / early intervention**

18. In order to ensure that support for very young children is effectively co-ordinated all the relevant services, working with Early Years settings and other providers, should together develop a strategy for intervention and for the co-ordination of services.
19. In order to ensure that intervention is effective, the same group should agree on an appropriate range of outcome measures for early intervention.

### **Autistic spectrum disorder**

20. In order to ensure that an effective service is provided by children and young people with ASD; the Local Authority should:
  - i. consider establishing a coordinated framework of support for ASD children embracing SENIT staff, EPS, ARMS and special schools
  - ii. ensure that specialist staff delivering services to ASD are supported by appropriate training to acquire qualifications to support their expertise.

### **Speech, language and communication**

21. In order to ensure services for children are effective, they should be delivered within a clear strategic framework setting out a continuum of provision and the co-ordination of services.
22. In order to ensure that the effectiveness for children and young people with SLCN is evaluated consistently, an agreed set of outcome measures, including both standardised academic and language measures and qualitative measures, should be developed, systematically collected, and reported.

### **Physical difficulties**

23. In order to ensure a coordinated service supporting children and young people with Physical Difficulties consideration should be given to a closer integration of the SENIT functions with the ARMS facility and the Cedars School. It would be appropriate to consider the assessment, outreach and support functions being delivered on behalf of the Local Authority by the ARMS or special school.

## **Recommendations regarding Behaviour Support Services**

1. In order that the effectiveness of behaviour support can be appreciated and evaluated, all those involved in this area (Behaviour Support Services, special schools, educational psychologists, SEN service) should work together to develop and agree an appropriate range of outcome measures that can be collected systematically, analysed and reported on.
2. In order to ensure consistency is maintained across the full continuum of behaviour support, consideration should be given to the Behaviour Support Service having a more overt role in linking with special schools and SEN behavioural decisions including out of authority placements.
3. In order to ensure the quality of alternative provision is at an appropriate level, the developmental work within the Authority on Quality Standards should be completed and implemented.

## **Recommendations regarding other areas of provision**

### **Independent special schools**

1. In order to have a better understanding of why special school placements come about the LA should undertake an exercise in 'reverse engineering' the case files of the children currently placed to identify the factors that led to the placement and how they could be avoided.
2. If the reverse engineering review confirms the perception that some placements have come about because of a lack of available therapies the Commissioner should review the arrangements for commissioning these services. This would not necessarily require the commissioning of additional therapy time it might be that the existing services that are currently commissioned would be redirected to fulfill a required role or it might be that joint commissioning dialogue with Health Service commissioners could lead to a reconfiguration as to how they provide services.
3. In order to progress to a shared strategy on the use of independent schools; the commissioners should convene groups of relevant specialist teachers, educational psychologists and special school staff to consider what action can be taken to work together to ensure that the needs of more children are met within the Authority.
4. In order to reduce the need for an external placement, by ensuring that appropriate provision is available within the Authority the Authority should consider the pattern of provision that is available for children with autism or BESD.

5. In order to enable the LA to make appropriate provision to reduce the need for out of authority placements a system of early identification should be introduced. Specialist teachers, educational psychologists and others should be required to notify the SEN commissioning team if the possibility of a residential placement is being considered so that they can consider commissioning additional provision if required.
6. In order to limit the placement of children out of authority with hearing and vision needs the commissioning of these services should contain the specific requirement to minimize the number of places and to report on the profile of placements on an annual basis.
7. In order to ensure that the needs of children are being met an extended review of out of county placements should take place prior to each transition point. If the evidence suggests that the pupil is not making satisfactory progress towards achieving the stated outcomes then consideration for a change of placement should take place.
8. In order to ensure that the effectiveness of independent school placements are monitored they should be required to produce outcome data on pupils, including national curriculum performance and rates of progress. The destiny of such pupils post 16 should be monitored and reported on as an indicator of effective outcomes.
9. In order to strengthen the Authorities position when faced with a request for an out of authority placement (and to help inform parental choice) the LA should build up a profile of the successful delivery of outcomes in its own schools. Outcome measures should include National Curriculum performance, success in meeting outcome criteria identified in statements/EHC Plans and post school destinations, including NEET.
10. In order to strengthen the authorities position if facing a request to extend an out of authority placement beyond 16 or 18 the statement/EHC Plan should have clear outcome specifications for the pupil. This would enable the Authority to legitimately challenge any new outcomes that were added to extend provision.
11. In order to draw upon best practice liaise with your nearest statistical neighbor (Sunderland) to see how they have sustained a consistent downward trend in their use of such placements.

## **Jewish schools**

12. A memorandum of understanding should be drawn up between the Local Authority and the Jewish Community setting out a shared understanding as to respective responsibilities.

## **Educational Psychologists**

13. In order to address the anomaly of funding of educational psychologist service, the commissioner should either:

- i. transfer the resources to the 'other educational and community block'
- or
- ii. develop in discussion with the service what outcomes SENS want from the EPS for the equivalent of 2 FTE staff.

## **Speech and Language Therapists**

14. In order to ensure that therapeutic specialists are used appropriately and appropriately resourced, a joint commissioning strategy should be developed with Health Service colleagues that specifies:

- i. the level of therapeutic services
- ii. the resourcing of therapeutic services
- iii. the priority activities of therapeutic services
- iv. the agreed outcomes that will be reported on.

## **Recommendations: commissioning Early Years support provision**

1. In order to ensure that there is a co-ordinated and comprehensive strategy for the identification and support of special educational needs, all the practitioners engaged in this area of work need to meet together to develop:

- A shared understanding of the complementary roles they each can play and how each service can best contribute to meeting the needs of young children.
- A model for a single database which will capture all children from early concern and can be used by all services delivering to children under five; including children's centres, Health Services, PVI's, SENIT, SENCOS and Educational Psychologists.
- Agreement as to how progress of this group can best be measured and the effectiveness of intervention be reflected in outcome measures. (Given the risk of false positives and false negatives in early diagnosis, the accuracy of early referrals and diagnosis should also be monitored and reported on.)
- An integrated pathway of early support for children and families and a communication strategy for sharing this.

### **Recommendations: commissioning of other High Needs Block areas**

1. In order to ensure that financial data is helpfully used to inform decision making it is recommended that models of cost attribution are based on actuals rather than proxy indicators.
2. In order to have a full understanding of the cost involved in addressing each area of need it is recommended that all costs associated with an area of need are coded in a way that can be brought together a single financial out-turn.
3. In order that a value for money evaluation can be made by the commissioner it is recommended that outcome and destination data is used to see what provision / which placements achieve the best outcomes at what price.
4. In order to ensure that risk is minimised any identified areas of risk should be reviewed by the financial team and the SEN commissioner. If it is agreed they are a potential area of risk, then a monitoring and review strategy should be agreed.
5. In order to ensure resources are effectively targeted the banded funding framework needs to be reviewed and consideration given to 'narrower' bands, or adopting a 'nearest' band model.

### **Recommendations: special education equipment**

1. In order to ensure proper cost attribution and accountability it would be helpful if costs could be directly associated to the area of need (e.g. VI or PMLD) and the service managers informed.
2. In order to ensure effective use of resources a working group should explore the viability of establishing a database and equipment store that would allow resources to be recycled and resources reduced.
3. In order to ensure costs fall appropriately on the Local Authority budget a joint commissioning protocol should be established with Health Services which indicates agreement on which service has responsibility for which area and establishes a protocol to address the issue of one service (e.g. physiotherapist from health) expecting expenditure from the other.

### **Recommendations: parents and special educational needs**

1. In order to ensure that working with parents enhances the commissioning process the Local Authority should undertake a brief strategic review of this, in partnership with parents.

2. In order to ensure that they are fit for purpose, any commissioning arrangements for Parent Partnerships and Parent Carer forums will need to be reviewed to ensure that there are clear expectations, reporting arrangements and outcome measures.
3. In order to meet the requirements set out in the new Draft Code, the Local Authority will have to arrange for an independent disagreement resolution service that meets the standards set out in section 7.3 of the Code, and ensure that independent mediation and advice is available for parents to the standards set out in section 7.4 of the new code.
4. In order to comply with new legislative requirements all literature produced to support parents, including web pages, will have to be appropriately revised.
5. If the strategic review confirms that there is an issue relating to the sensitivity of staff working with parents then the Local Authority should consider the need for staff training and development.
6. The Local Authority could help develop a person specification for the chair of the Parent Cover forum which could be the time a person can serve as chair. The Local Authority could also help develop a shared strategy that would empower the forum to be able to engage with more parents.

**Recommendation: ethnicity and special needs**

1. In order to ensure that pupils for ethnic backgrounds are not underestimated or over estimated it is recommended that there is a field on the SEN database for ethnicity.